

8-031 2007 DALE FARM PRESS BIAS LETTER

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Keith Lomax
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RE: ECHO ARTICLE ON HOUSES IN WOLVERHAMPTON

13 May 2007

Dear Keith,

Enclosed is a copy of the article in the ECHO newspaper, Basildon, for 10 August 2006, headed ***Revealed: Travellers secret council homes*** by Jon Austin, which you said you'd like to have in hand in case the issue is brought up at the Judicial Review.

As you will see, both Nora Berry and Joanne Sheridan told Jon Austin they had lived in houses at Wolverhampton. Mary Quilligan said her daughter Philomena had lived in a council house there, giving good reasons for leaving.

The rest is a generalisation in which Austin simply quotes a list of surnames which can be found at Dale Farm, but are not necessarily the same people. Similar names can be found among residents of Rathkeal, the village near Limerick, where the Sheridans have many relations.

When Martina McCarthy visits Wolverhampton the family stay at her father-in-law's house. Many times, family visitors park their caravans

in the streets mentioned in the article. Just as visitors to Dale Farm come in their caravans and stay for a while in someone's yard. This is part of the pattern of the Travelling way of life.

Incidentally I think a fair question to the present Basildon administration is when did they last grant planning permission a private Traveller's yard (plot) in the district.

They keep saying they have "provided" many pitches - but what they are referring to is the granting of planning permission by the previous Labour administration, going back to the 1970s. As far as we know, the Malcom Buckley-led Tory administration has itself granted no permits; has turned down many applications and where these have been granted (temporary periods) on appeal has entered its own appeals against such decisions.

I had a meeting with Manager of Planning Clive Simpson on May 9 for the purpose of persuading him to recommend the council pass the Dale Farm Housing Association's application to develop a caravan park at Terminus Drive, Pitsea. As you know, this is the location suggested by John Prescott as an alternative for Dale Farm residents facing eviction.

Simpson said in so many words that we had made a correct and astute move and that the application had merit as this is a brown field site with no access problems and not near residential housing (this has not stopped 300 people writing in already to oppose our application).

We have yet to see whether he will recommend it and what whether it will be considered at the Development Committee's meeting on 7 June, or be left until after the Judicial Review.

I enclose an Invoice covering some of the visits I have made to Dale Farm over past weeks in connection with Legal Aid and the JR.

Sincerely,

Grattan Puxon